Review: European Editions of the Jan 2017 National Geographic Special Issue “Gender Revolution”

article, non-discrimination

This is a review of some of the European editions of the National Geographic Special Issue “Gender Revolution” as translated into European languages. Comments on the translations are listed in alphabetical order according to country of issue. Where possible trans people from the country or region have given comments on the national editions and suggestions for improvement.

Globally, 30 editions of the National Geographic January magazine have been published with a “Gender cover”. These are: English, Arabic, Brazil (Portuguese), China, **Croatia**, **Czech Republic**, Denmark, **Estonia**, **Finland**, Georgia, **Germany, Hungary**, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, **Italy**, Japan, Korea, Latin America (Spanish), **Lithuania**, Netherlands, Norway, **Romania**, **Serbia**, **Slovenia**, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, and **Turkey**. Other editions might not have had a cover, but included some translated content, like France and Spain.

The National Geographic Magazine local-language editions which were published with Gender Covers.

Read Transgender Europe’s statement, calling on the National Geographic for a response.



This list was last updated on February 9th 2017, to send us comments on your national edition of “Gender Revolution” e-mail Mina, TGEU’s Communications Officer on mina@tgeu.org.

Croatia : good practice

“There are some positive aspects of the Croatian edition that in my opinion make it better than many other

localized editions that I've heard of. First, looking at the word of the editor-in-chief of National Geographic Croatia, Hrvoje Pr?i?, it is clear this is a person who stands against transphobia.

Second, there is the praiseworthy effort that both the editor-in-chief and the translator took to contact Trans Aid, a Croatian trans organisation, to discuss the issue, ask for input, clarification, comments – to collaborate on making the issue the best it can be – and taking much of that input on board. Third, they included mention of local and regional organisations that can be turned to for support in an article on "Helping Families Talk About Gender.

Finally, they featured a local trans activist as an expert on the topic of this month's issue of the magazine – giving a voice to trans people directly instead of resorting to the all too often seen tendency to ask others (doctors, psychologists, lawyers, politicians – seemingly anyone but us) about our experiences."

To improve this edition, the translation of the word "intersex" should have been the one used by local activists and organisations in the region (interspolno), and not a word (me?uspolno) that is not used at all by LGBTIQ communities in the region.


POMOĆ OBITELJIMA U RAZGOVORU O RODU

This article references local trans and LGBTQ organisations as go-to places for help and support.



The interview with trans activist Ari Kajtezovic which appeared in the Croatian edition of “Gender Revolution”.

Comments and translations were provided by Arian Kajtezovic.

Read more

Czech Republic : bad practice

In an open-letter to the Editor-in-Chief of the National Geographic, Trans*parent, a trans rights organisation from the Czech Republic points out a number of problematic issues with the Czech edition of the National Geographic’s Special Issue “Gender Revolution”. Including but not limited to the incorrect translation and definitions of terminology, the omission of articles which could have supported and raised trans awareness in the country, and more seriously an editorial which calls the “gender revolution” a “disintegration of traditional family, nation, religion, and race.” and an expert interview with a psychiatrist, sexologist, and former politician who “routinely conflates the term ‘sexual orientation’ with ‘gender identity’.”

Read full letter



The covers of the US editions (left, centre) and the Czech edition (right) of the National Geographic's special issue on 'Gender Revolution'

Estonia : OK practice

In Estonia there was also a special issue on gender. No major issues have been flagged.

Finland : OK practice

In Finland there was also a special issue on gender. No major issues have been flagged, other than the use of out-dated terms like "biological sex", and "sex change".

Comment provided by Panda Eriksson from the Finnish organisation Trasek ry.

France : problematic practice

At face value, the French edition of the National Geographic published in January 2017 does not seem to be about the "Gender Revolution". The front cover shows a picture of Moscow, Russia with the title "Special: Russia". Small text on the cover indicates that some of the content is about gender, these seem to be direct translation of the content in the USA edition.

To improve this edition the team should have made sure that gender remained a focus, including on the cover.



The cover of the French edition of the National Geographic in January 2017.

We did not have full access to the French edition while writing this review.

Germany : OK practice with one problematic article

The German edition of “Gender Revolution” includes an opinion piece about “transgender issues” which is transphobic (pages 14 and 15). The article suggests that trans people identify in this way to make themselves interesting and that parents who support their trans children are ignoring and overriding biology which cannot be changed.

On a positive note the edition also included an interview with a trans person in Germany, and online the article ‘Der Reformbedarf für das Transsexuellengesetz ist riesig’ which is an interview with Dr. Laura Adamietz is to be commended. Overall the edition is well translated and takes into consideration the many complexities of the topic.

The Bundesverband Trans* (BvT), a network of German trans organisations comments:

“In his sharpened way of writing Harald Welzer tries to be witty. Unfortunately he completely misses the point regarding trans realities, as he is obviously completely unaware of the odyssey trans children and their families face in Germany when trying to be accepted for who they are.”

To improve this edition opinion pieces based on myths and intended to sensationalise trans issues should not have been included.



Kolumbus ohne GPS

The transphobic opinion piece included in the German edition of the National Geographic.

Hungary : bad practice

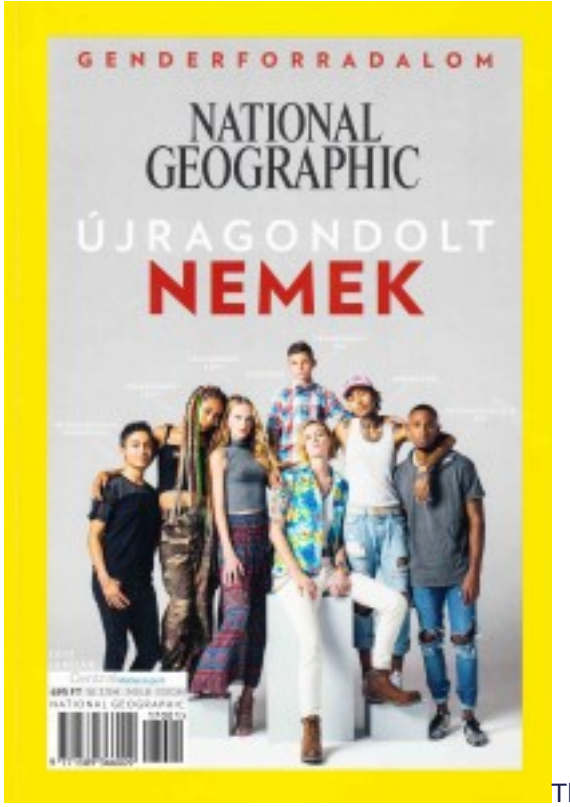
In Hungary the trans community were not contacted during the process of the creation of the magazine. Instead, a glossary from an old blog was used to reference terms, although this blog had been harmful to the trans community in Hungary in the past. This blog was in the past endorsed by LGBT NGOs which are not using it's terminology in their work/communications or even media guides; and quoted by some online portals, some of them using it often in a rather transphobic way.

The edition contains weird translations of terms compared to the common language which has been used for decades by academics, policy and lawmaking authorities, and also civil society and other stakeholders. For instance, a terms for "gender identity" which has been used since the 90s in laws, academic publications, and other areas has not been used; the publication introduces another term. The whole publication uses "gender" as it is rarely used on any platforms and the wider population has hardly ever met with such language.

There is a country-specific article which refers to gay rights, the ILGA-Europe rainbow index and LGBT NGOs. No Trans organisation or person is quoted.

To improve this edition the National Geographic should have reached out to trans organisations and activists in Hungary. Additionally they should have also interviewed trans people to talk about gender issues, and not someone to talk about gay rights.
"It was a great opportunity to raise awareness in the country and although we don't see it as a complete failure it raises also a lot of confusion with the mixed up terminology which is at the same time is not used consequently."
Some concrete examples: bigender is "kétnem?" in Hungarian, it is a widely used and easily understood term. Instead NatGeo uses bigender even on the cover.
Gender identity is "nemi identitás". They use "gendeidentitás"
Cisgender is "cisznem?" – they use "cisznem?/ciszgender"
Transgender is "transznem?" – they use "transznem?/transgender"

Gender role is “nemi szerep” – they use “genderszerep”
Agender is “nemtelen” – they use “agender/non-gender”
Gender is either “nem” or sometimes referred to as “társadalmi nem” they use “gender”
gender expression is “nemi önkifejezés” – they use “genderkifejezés”



The cover of the Special Issue “Gender Revolution” in Hungary.


NEMI HOVATARTOZÁS TESTBEN ÉS LÉLEKBEN

The glossary in Hungarian included many mistranslated terms.



A kifejezés régi megfogalmazása, a „hermafrodita” ma már elavultnak és sértőnek számít.

Transznemű/transzgender: Akiknek genderidentitása különbözik a biológiai nemétől. Ebből adódik genderkifejezésében eltérés a társadalmilag elvártól, a hagyományos modellektől. A „transznemű” szó önmagában semmit sem mond a nemi irányultságáról. Attól, hogy valaki transzneműnek határozza meg magát, még éppen úgy lehet hetero-, homo-, biszexuális vagy más irányultságú, mint a ciszneműek.

Agender/non-gender: Aki egyik genderrel sem azonosul, vagy úgy érzi, egyik genderhez sem tartozik.

Androgén: Különösen és testi adottságaiban hagyományos értelemben vett férfi- és női nemi jelleget egyaránt mutat. Ebből ennek ellenére sem férfi, sem női jegyeket nem mutat, biológiai neme nem egyértelmű.

Nemi irányultság: Ki-ki vonzódhat az ellenkező nemhez/genderhez, a sajátjához vagy mindkettőhöz, esetleg egyikhez sem.

Aszexuális: Senkit sem érez nemi vonzalmat.

Heteroszexuális: Más nemekhez vonzódik. Genderszempontból ránézve az is heteroszexuálisnak mondható, aki más genderűekhez vonzódik, aki *genderidentitása* és biológiai neme szerint férfi, és genderidentitása alapján magukat nőknek érző személyekhez vonzódik.

Homoszexuális: Azonos nemekhez vonzódik. Genderszempontból homoszexuális az a férfi is, aki genderidentitásában magukat férfiaknak érző személyekhez vonzódik, függetlenül az illetők biológiai nemétől.

Nemi diszfória: A nemi identitásával helyett újában beszerzett kifejezés. A „zavar” szó ugyanis negatív előjelű.

Genderszerep: A biológiai nemmel egybevágó, hagyományosan elvárt férfi, illetve női viselkedésformák együttese. Az a szereplés, amelyet a társadalom az adott nemhez rendel. Arra mód, ahogy a férfinak, illetve a nőnek öltözés, beszélnie, gondolkodnia és viselkednie illik; a cél, amely felé törekednie kell; a tevékenységek, amelyekben illik kitűnnie, amelyekben áttörést kell lelnie. A genderszerepek, nemi viselkedésminták jellemzői kultúrafüggők. A nyugati világban egyelőre a hőkori szerepfelosztás az uralkodó.

Átmenet/tranzíció: Folyamat, amelynek során a cisznemű sorsától hosszabb vagy rövidebb idő alatt átformálja, genderidentitásához igazítja az életét. Ennek egyik fontos mozzanata lehet az „előbújás” (coming out), a genderkifejezés átalakítása, a születéskor megjelölt nem hivatalos átírása, hormonkezelés, műtét stb.

Születéskor megjelölt nem: A születési anyakönyvi kivonatban és más hivatalos dokumentumokban rögzített nem. Némely országokban hivatalosan megváltoztatható, megfelelő indokkal átírható.

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The glossary in Hungarian included many mistranslated terms.

Comments and translation were provided by Krisztina Kolos Orban from the Hungarian NGO Transvanilla.

Italy : problematic practice

At face value, the Italian edition of “Gender Revolution” seems to be a translation of the original edition in English. Unlike some other European editions, the Italian translation also keeps the editorial piece by National Geographic Editor-in-Chief Susan Goldberg. This therefore means that mainly it is only those problems present in the original that are kept in the Italian edition. However in addition, the description of a “male” person on the cover photo is translated to “maschio eterosessuale” (heterosexual male).

It is positive that the original cover depicting a variety of people who identify in different ways was kept.

To improve this edition the team should have contacted Italian trans and LGBTQI organisations, to make content relevant to an Italian context. In particular for those articles which outline how families can talk about gender, and the glossary.



The cover of the Italian edition on “Gender Revolution”.

We did not have full access to the Italian edition while writing this review.

Lithuania : OK practice

LGL, the National LGBT* organisation in Lithuania have said that the Lithuanian edition of the magazine was fine.

Although there were some minor issues and the organisation was not consulted directly it was clear that the terminology used was consistent with the terminology published by LGL and that is used in their publications and communications. There was no interview with a Lithuanian person on the topic.

To improve this edition an interview with a Lithuanian Trans or LGBT activist would have been helpful in explaining the current situation for trans people in the country.

Romania : bad practice

In Romania, Patrick Br?ila calls the translation “unresearched”. He comments that none of the LGBTQI NGOs in the country were contacted for advice, input or comments, and as a result the “translation is poor, particularly when it comes to gender identity.” He stresses that; “In Romania, the trans community is invisible, for the Romanian state I, as a trans person, do not exist. This edition of the National Geographic could have shed light onto our struggles for legal gender recognition, and could have been a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, it was not so.”

“As a result, the translation is poor, especially when it comes to gender identities: Gender Dysphoria has been translated as “Disforie sexual?” (Sexual Dysphoria), Gender Identity as “Identitate sexual?” (Sexual Identity) and

transgender as “transgen” (even though we prefer the term “transgender”).”

Furthermore the international cover which shows a group of young people who identify as trans, non-binary, intersex, and other identities was used in Romania, but they have removed the word ‘intersex’ from the description of intersex activist Pidgeon Pagonis. This contributes to the lack of awareness for intersex people in the country.

To improve this edition trans people should have been consulted to translate basic terminology. In addition an interview with a trans person from Romania would have helped introduce this invisible community and their struggles to the general public.

Read full comment


REVOLUȚIA GENULUI

The editorial in the Romanian edition of the National Geographic special issue on gender.

Comments and translation provided by Patrick Br?ila.

Serbia : problematic practice

In Serbia the cover of the magazine is controversial as it features “male/female” figures that are often used as bathroom signs. This cover oversimplifies the complex issue of gender and narrows it down to the gender binary, excluding other gender identities.

The local trans organisation was not contacted to contribute to the edition.

To improve this edition a cover that does not focus on the gender binary should have been used.



Comment provided by Gayten-LGBT, an NGO in Serbia.

We did not have full access to the Serbian edition while writing this review.

Slovenia : good practice

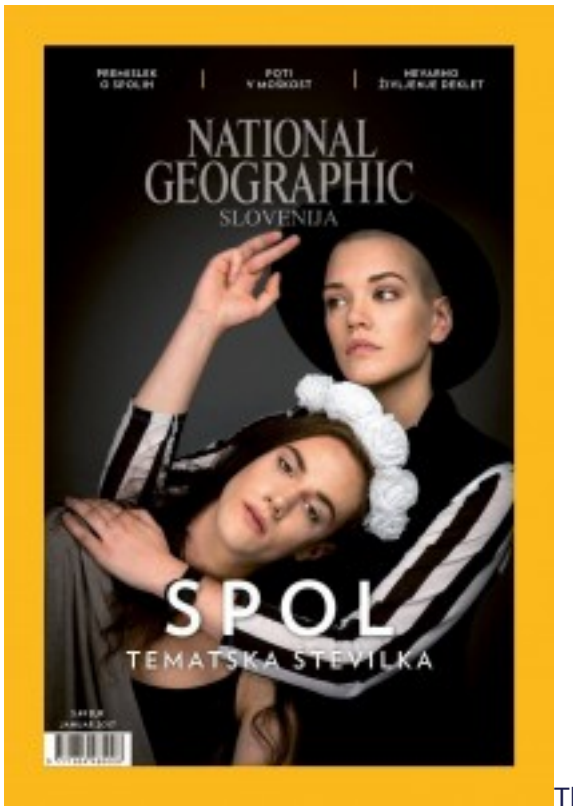
In Slovenia the organisation TransAkcija was contacted so that they could contribute to the translation and editing of the glossary. These translations and edits were accepted by the magazine and accredited to the organisation.

“Overall the issue is fine and we think it’s important that it exists and that we were included in the consultation.”

To improve this edition terms like “biological sex” should have been avoided in the content in order to match the glossary provided by a trans organisation.



The glossary in the Slovenian Edition of “Gender Revolution” was translated after consultation with local NGO TransAkcija.



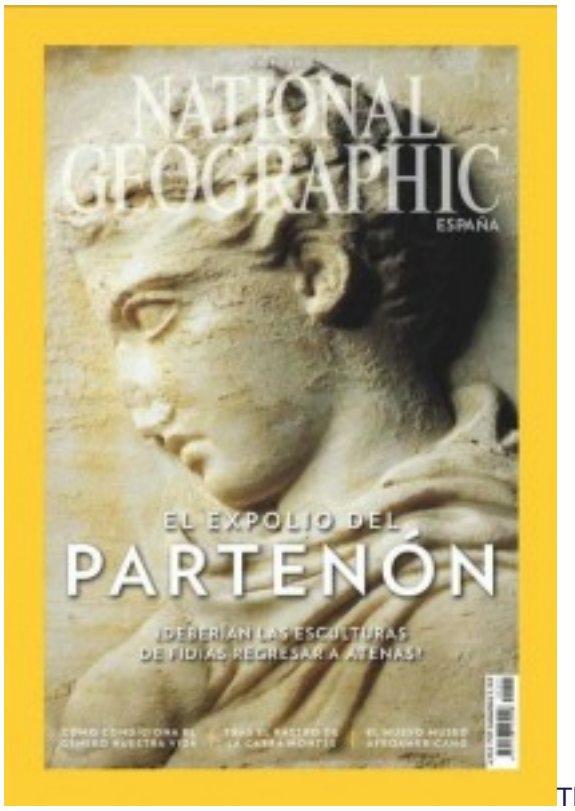
The cover of National Geographic Slovenia in January 2017.

Comments and translations were provided by Anja Koletnik and Evan Ana Grm, from the trans organsiation TransAkcija which is based in Slovenia.

Spain : problematic practice

At face value, the Spanish edition of the National Geographic published in January 2017 does not seem to be about the “Gender Revolution”. Small text indicates that at least one article (“how gender conditions our lives”) is about gender, it might be a direct translation of an article in the USA edition.

To improve this edition the team should have made sure that gender remained a focus, including on the cover.



The cover of the Spanish edition of the National Geographic in January 2017.

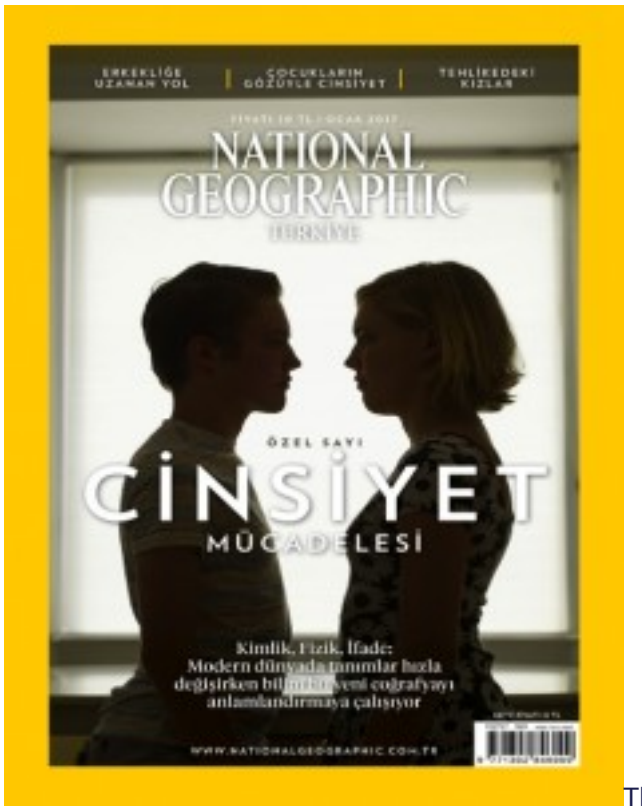
We did not have full access to the Spanish edition while writing this review.

Turkey : problematic practice

GZone, an LGBTI+ website in Turkey have called out Do?u? Media Group in Turkey for censoring the National Geographic special issue on gender. (translation provided byLGBTI News Turkey)

“Do?u? Media Group, who own the rights of the magazine in Turkey and have been publishing it for the last 17 years, has in a sense censored the cover photo and the headline by mistranslat?ng it. The same issue of the magazine in Turkey did not have the trans kid Avery Jackson on the cover and the headline which should have been translated as “Cinsiyet Devrimi” [“Gender Revolution” –trans.] was translated as “Cinsiyet Mücadelesi” [“Gender Struggle” –trans] for some reason. The cover on the Turkish edition of the magazine minimizes the perceived content to heterosexual female and male gender despite content which predominantly addresses LGBTI individuals and the expanding perception of gender.”

LGBTI News Turkey further commented that the interior of the magazine was not as problematic as the cover and title translation. While since receiving feedback, the Do?u? Media Group have corrected some terminology online.



The cover of the National Geographic in Turkey

In addition, the translation of the ‘Gender Revolution’ documentary is being done in collaboration or with feedback from a Gender Studies Program at Sabanci University. This is promising.